

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ATHENS 02069 041919Z

53

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 128238

O R 041801Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2990

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

USMISSION USUN NY

USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T ATHENS 2069

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS DISCUSSES THE AEGEAN QUESTION

1. DURING THE COURSE OF A VISIT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DITSIOS MARCH 3 ON THE OCCASION OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LAINGEN'S VISIT HERE, BITSIOS SHARED WITH MR. LAINGEN AND THE AMBASSADOR SOME OF HIS VIEWS ON THE AEGEAN QUESTION. WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE EARMARKING OF SELECTED GREEK MILITARY UNITS FOR NATO, BITSIOS PINNED GREEK RELUCTANCE ON THIS ISSUE TO THE REAL APPREHENSION IN GREECE OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF ACTIVE CONFRONTATION WITH TURKEY. WHILE BITSIOS WAS QUICK TO NOTE THAT THE GOG HAS NO "CONCRETE INFORMATION" AS TO TURKISH OFFENSIVE PLANS, NEVERTHELESS HE CITED RECENT TURKISH DECLARATIONS, POSITIONS AND STANCES RELATED TO THE AEGEAN AND GREEK ISLANDS THERE AS EVIDENCE THAT TURKISH AGGRESSION SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED. MANY OF THESE TURKISH STATEMENTS, HE ADDED, CONSTITUTED A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO GREEK TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY.

2. WHEN MR. ALINGEN NOTED TZOUNIS' CHOICE OF WORDS THAT SUCH A CONFRONTATION IN GREEK EYES WAS "A

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 ATHENS 02069 041919Z

POSSIBILITY" RATHER THAN "A PROBABILITY," BITSIOS

REPLIED THAT ONE NEVER KNOWS TO WHAT DEGREE THE TURKS WILL ESCALATE TENSIONS AND INFLAME PUBLIC OPINION ON BOTH SIDES, SO THAT CONTROL IS LOST BOTH OVER PUBLIC OPINION AND THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN CAPACITY FOR ACTION. BITSIOS THEN MADE A POINT OF RECALLING THAT ON TWO OCCASIONS SECRETARY KISSINGER SAID THAT "THE U.S. WOULD OPPOSE ANY AGGRESSION IN THE AEGEAN." BITSIOS REMARKED THAT IT COULD WELL HAPPEN THAT AT SOME MOMENT IN THE FUTURE PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS MIGHT ASK FOR AN ELABORATION OF THE SECRETARY'S COMMENT, I.E., WHAT REALLY WOULD U.S. "OPPOSITION" CONSTITUTE.

3. MR. LAINGEN DREW TO BITSIOS' ATTENTION THAT IN TURKEY SIMILAR APPREHENSIONS ARE FOUND AND THAT THE TURKS PERCEIVE A DANGER DUE IN PART TO THEIR OWN WEAKENED STATE AS THE RESULT OF THE EMBARGO. BITSIOS RESPONDED THAT GREECE HAS NO CLAIMS ON TURKEY AND THAT THE TURKS KNOW THAT. THE TURKS KNOW THEY CAN CAUSE TROUBLE FOR THE GREEKS, HE DECLARED, AND THEY ALSO KNOW THAT THE GREEKS WON'T CONSCIOUSLY CAUSE TROUBLE FOR THEM. THEY KNOW THAT--BUT THEY SPEAK DIFFERENTLY. BITSIOS THEN ASKED, "EVEN IF WE WISHED TO ATTACK, WHERE WOULD WE ATTACK AND WHY?" BITSIOS CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY ASSERTING IN A DELIBERATE TONE, "WE WILL DEFEND OURSELVES, BE SURE OF THAT."

4. IN A SUBSEQUENT MEETING THAT SAME DAY, MFA DIRECTOR FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS TZOUNIS DISCUSSED THE AEGEAN AS WELL. ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE, HE ASSERTED THE TURKS ARE ACTIVELY RESISTING SUBMITTING THE CASE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE (ICJ), "THEY DON'T WANT IT," HE SAID. THE GREEKS, TZOUNIS SAID, CONSIDER THE ICJ APPROACH THE FAIREST PROPOSAL OF ALL--ESPECIALLY SINCE THE GOG DOES NOT REPEAT NOT EXPECT TO GET "ONE HUNDRED PERCENT OF WHAT WE ASK FOR." TZOUNIS ALSO STATED THAT THE AIR RIGHTS QUESTION (FIR) AND THE SHELF ISSUE MUST BE VIEWED TOGETHER TO SEE WHAT THE TURKS REALLY WANT. THEY WANT A LINE DRAWN HALF WAY ACROSS THE AEGEAN AND THEY WILL TAKE WHAT IS TO THE EAST OF IT, HE SAID. THUS, LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE TURKS PROGRESS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 ATHENS 02069 041919Z

FROM A SECURITY ZONE DEMAND, TO ECONOMIC DEMANDS, AND FINALLY THEY HOPE TO GAIN EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS OF AN ENLARGED AEGEAN AREA WITH FULL POLITICAL PREROGATIVES AS WELL. REFERRING TO TURKISH EXERCISES AS AN INDEX, HE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE PERIOD 1971-1972 THERE WAS ONLY ONE EXERCISE, WHILE IN 1975 THERE WERE 28. TO MR. LAINGEN'S REFERENCE TO THE TURKISH PERCEPTION OF A THREAT FROM THE GREEKS RELEVANT TO THEIR ISLANDS' MILITARIZED STATUS, TZOUNIS

ASKED, "DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THEY FEAR AN ATTACK FROM GREECE?" HE DENIED FLATLY THAT THE GOG HAD ANY SUCH INTENT. HE ASSERTED THAT THE TURKS "ARE PUSHING US AND WE ARE ALWAYS ON THE DEFENSIVE." HE NOTED THAT THE GREEKS HAVE NEVER SAID THAT THE AEGEAN IS A GREEK LAKE, BUT "WHAT WE DO SAY IS EACH OF OUR ISLANDS HAS A CONTINENTAL SHELF."

5. TZOUNIS STATED THAT HE DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT THE TURKS WILL EVER GO TO THE COURT JOINTLY WITH THE GREEKS. HE CITED POLITICAL FACTORS FOR THIS, I.E., PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL WAS ROUNDLY CRITICIZED BY ECEVIT FOR HIS INITIAL AGREEMENT TO GO TO THE COURT. THE TURKS BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN GET A BETTER DEAL THROUGH BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS THAN BY GOING TO THE COURT. FINALLY, TZOUNIS STATED THE AEGEAN IS AN URGENT QUESTION -- "DON'T DISCOUNT IN WASHINGTON THE DANGERS OF THE AEGEAN," HE WARNED. THE AEGEAN IS MORE SIGNIFICANT IN THE LONG RUN THAN CYPRUS, HE STRESSED, AND THERE MIGHT WELL BE A CONFRONTATION THERE. "WE WILL NEVER HAND THE ISLANDS TO THE TURKS ON A SILVER PLATTER," HE TOLD US. HE THEN REFERRED TO THE TURKS' BEHAVIOR IN THE AEGEAN AS HAVING A DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON GREEK TOURISM, AND HE CITED THIS AS A PARTICULARLY SERIOUS CONCERN FOR THE GOG. FINALLY, HE STATED THAT IF IN THE TURKISH MINDS THERE IS A LINKAGE BETWEEN CYPRUS AND THE AEGEAN -- "THAT MEANS THEY'RE NOT SERIOUS ON CYPRUS."

KUBISCH

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY EXERCISES, AEGEAN
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 MAR 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ATHENS02069
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760083-0164
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760397/aaaadhdk.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <15 APR 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS DISCUSSES THE AEGEAN QUESTION
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU, (BITSIOS, DIMITRIOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006